DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 161 125 95 EA 010 938

AUTHOR	Sayers, Susan
TITLE	Effective Groups: Guidelines for Participants. Keys to Community Involvement Series: 9.
INSTITUTION	National School Public Relations Association, Arlington, Va.; Northwest Regional Educational Lab., Portland, Oreg.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Jan 78
CONTRACT	400-76-0025
NOTE	23p.; For related documents, see EA 010 930-944
AVAILABLE FROM	National School Public Relations Association, 1801 North Moore Street, Arlington, Virginia 22209 ($2.00; $24.00 for set of 15 Keys; discounts available; payment must accompany order)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Citizen Participation; *Communication Skills; *Community Involvement; Group Activities; *Group Dynamics; *Group Relations; Individual Needs; Interpersonal Competence; *Organizational Effectiveness; Responsibility

ABSTRACT

This booklet is written for anyone who is a member of a group and who, by personal behavior, wants to influence the group toward productive and satisfying ends. The contents of the booklet are divided into three sections. In the first section information is presented on the needs a person brings to a group--needs for feeling included, having power, and giving and receiving affection. The second section gives guidelines for communication skills, speaking for yourself, dealing with differences, and maintaining openness. The final section briefly describes four stages of small-group development and suggests ways to assist the group to operate effectively. (Author/MLF)

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Keys to Community Involvement Series

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A Publication of the National School Public Relations Association

Janucry 1978

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This publication is not printed at the expense of the Federal Government.

Printed and bound in the United States of America.

KEYS TO COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

EFFECTIVE GROUPS: GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPANTS

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National School Public Relations Association
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to thank the following Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory staff members for their assistance: Robert G. Green, Managing Editor; Diane G. Jones and Bonnie Holt, Coordination and Production Assistance; Chris Brown and Dee Rowe, Manuscript Typing; and Warren Schlegel, Cover Design and Illustrations.

Also acknowledged are the contributions of the Laboratory's Rural Education Program staff members whose work forms the basis of the *Keys to Community Involvement* booklets. Suggestions and comments from a number of people in western communities, schools and organizations have also been invaluable in shaping the ideas that are contained in these materials.

ABOUT THE SERIES

Keys to Community Involvement is a series of booklets developed for governing boards, community leaders, group members, administrators and citizens. The booklets are designed to help these audiences strengthen their skills in group processes, work cooperatively with others, and plan and carry out new projects. Topics include techniques to maintain enthusiasm in a group, ways that agencies can effectively use consultants, and factors that affect introducing and implementing new projects.

The booklets are written by members of the Rural Education Program of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. The Laboratory is a nonprofit, educational research and development corporation, headquartered in Portland, Oregon.

The booklets in the series are adapted from a much more comprehensive set of materials and training activities developed and field tested by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory over the past several years in dozens of locations throughout the western United States.

Information about other booklets in this series--titles and how to order--as well as information about related services--training, workshops and consultation--can be found on the inside and outside back covers of this booklet.

INTRODUCTION

This booklet is written for anyone who is a member of a group and who, by personal behavior, wants to influence the group toward productive and satisfying ends.

The contents of the booklet are divided into three sections. In the first section information is presented on the needs a person brings to a group--needs for feeling included, having power, and giving and receiving affection. The second section discusses behavioral do's and don'ts that individuals can apply to their actions and reactions within a group. This section includes information on communication, speaking for yourself, dealing with differences and maintaining openness. In the final section, information is presented about group development: forming, storming, norming and performing.

The *Keys to Community Involvement* booklet series includes other booklets related to effective group functioning that may interest you. They are:

10. "Group Progress: Recognizing and Removing Barriers"
11. "Measuring and Improving Group Effectiveness"
15. "Group Leadership: Understanding, Guiding and Sharing"

For additional information on group success, you are encouraged to refer to these booklets.

INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

A THEORY

Individuals come into a group with specific, identifiable interpersonal needs. According to Schutz,[1] individuals have and express the three needs for inclusion, control and affection. According to his theory, individual group members are initially concerned with inclusion, then turn to issues of control and finally, seek to fulfill their needs for affection. The cycle of needs may be repeated during the life of a group, particularly as new members join, old members leave or the tasks or circumstances change. These stages of development are seen as sequential, overlapping and continually changing.

How is this theory useful to you as a group participant? When a new group is formed or when you first join a group, this theory predicts that the primary issue will be inclusion.

INCLUSION

Questions Typical of the Inclusion Phase

- How will I fit?
- Who will accept me?
- Who will reject me?
- What do I have to do to be accepted?

During the inclusion phase, people decide whether or not they've come to the "right" group. That is, they check to see which group members have dress styles, lifestyles, manners of speaking or interests similar to their own. The phase is an important one for establishing openness, trust

and a feeling of belonging. In groups where trust is established, members grow in self-confidence and self-esteem. Individual feelings of inclusion and adequacy are prerequisites to effective group functioning.

CONTROL

After inclusion needs are met, Schutz's theory predicts that an individual's attention will turn to influence and control.

Questions Typical of the Control Phase
• Who's in control?
• How can I influence this group?
• How are decisions made?
• How much power do I have?

During this phase individual members may move into power struggles with the designated leader. Habits of decision making develop, and information and responsibility are increasingly shared among members. Each person attempts to establish a comfortable level of influence. It is valuable at this point to ask yourself what degree of influence you feel most comfortable with--a great deal or hardly any at all. How might you experiment with other levels of influence?

After needs for inclusion and control are dealt with, a group member may confront emotional issues of affection and friendship. As with control needs, here again each person will experiment until the optimum degree of closeness with others is achieved. The quantity and quality of the friendship need may be different among group members.

AFFECTION

Questions Typical of the Affection Phase
• Who likes me?
• Whom do I care for?
• What are the norms for expressing affection?

Basic to a group's effectiveness is a level of trust, comfortable levels of power and influence and a feeling of being cared for and caring about others. The following information describes some specific things you can do to establish comfortable levels of inclusion, power and affection.

	As an individual member of a group, you can
Reach out to others to meet your own and their needs for INCLUSION	• Assign a role of host/hostess at your meeting to greet people. • Provide name tags. • Suggest "warm-up" or get-acquainted activities if there are new people. • Take a few minutes at the beginning of the meeting to introduce yourself and say something about what you do, why you came or what you hope to get out of the meeting. • Provide beverages or snacks over which people can socialize.

	As an individual member of a group, you can
Learn about, practice and share influence and CONTROL	• If you generally vie for a power position, experiment with getting comfortable sharing power with others; and if you generally feel confident to let others battle for power, experiment with increasing your own. • Learn about different styles of decision making. Study the decision-making norms of your group and share your findings with the group. (See Booklet 2, "Group Decision Making: Styles & Suggestions.") • Suggest that the group rotate roles of chairperson, record keeper and process observer. Be prepared to explain and volunteer for one of the positions.
Let others know you care about your own and their need for AFFECTION	• Come early to get to know others better on a personal basis. • Express verbally how you feel about members. • Give support to others by verbally recognizing good work, applauding what you like, expressing appreciation in a newsletter or meeting minutes. • Have a good time.

With this discussion of inclusion, control and affection as a base, the next section elaborates further on individual responsibility for creating and maintaining an effective group.

BEHAVIORIAL DO'S AND DON'TS

What is it that makes some groups fun as well as productive? This section examines individual behaviors that help create a positive, pleasant group climate. The material is covered in four parts: Communication Skills, Speaking for Yourself, Dealing with Differences, and Developing and Maintaining Openness."

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The following skills are neither new nor unique--many people use them spontaneously when interacting with others. Used by themselves these skills do not assure increased clarity of communication. In fact, if they are used inappropriately, they can arouse antagonism and obstruct communication. If, however, you have a genuine desire to understand another person, these communication skills can help you and others in overcoming many problems in the communication process.

1. Paraphrasing. Paraphrasing is a way of checking with the other person to be sure that you understand an idea or suggestion the way it is intended. To clarify meaning, restate in your own words what you heard another person say.

   Use diplomacy when you paraphrase. Don't tell someone, "What you mean is..." or "What you are trying to say is...." Rather, say, "I hear you saying..." or "Do you mean...?" and then supply the paraphrase. If the speaker has been misunderstood, he or she can provide additional

information to clarify the intended meaning. In addition, paraphrasing allows the listener to convey his or her interest in the other person's idea.

2. Sharing Information. Helpful information allows a positive response from the group. Such information can take the following form:

Communication Skills	Description	Example
Behavior Description	Reports specific observable behavior without judgment or evaluation	"When I was in the middle of my sentence, you cut in."
Perception Check	Describes your interpretation of the other's feelings	"I see you shaking your head as if you're confused. Was my last point clear?"
Describing Personal Feelings	Provides others with accurate information about your own emotional state	"I feel pleased with our progress." "I feel upset by the delay."

Communication that the group cannot act on is generally not helpful.

Examples of Unhelpful Information	
"You never pay any attention"	judgment
"You're foolish"	name-calling
"You just want to put people down"	accusation
"Stop talking so much"	command
"Oh, yeah, that's a great idea" (when the opposite is meant)	sarcasm

Generally, a message that begins with "you" will not be as effective as an "I" message. With an "I" message, you take responsibility for your own feelings, perceptions or ideas, and preserve the other person's self-esteem.

SPEAKING FOR YOURSELF

1. Take responsibility for words and deeds. A lot depends on how you say and do things. If you say "I can't," you're probably not taking as much responsibility as when you say "I won't." In productive, successful groups, individuals tend to accept responsibility for what they do and don't do and for what they say or choose not to say.

2. Make statements. Some people have turned inquiry into inquisition. Questions are sometimes a subtle form of aggression. Questions like "Why are you

late?" or "Where did you get your information?" are likely to put another person on the defensive. It is generally less offensive to make statements instead of asking questions. Rather than putting someone else on the spot, share the information that is available to you. For example, statements like "I wish you had been here earlier for the report" or "I'm confused and skeptical about the information you presented and curious to know your source" speak clearly of what's going on for you and allow the other person to respond without needing to defend.

3. Stay in the "Here and Now." Talking about the past or future can be a camouflage for present, but thorny, issues. "Here and Now" behaviors include talking directly to persons, saying what is on your mind and reporting about what is going on right now. For example, complaining about the bind you're in because the past president didn't do the work he or she was supposed to do won't help you get the job done. Talking about concrete behaviors or plans that you can influence will more likely lead to an effective group.

4. Share feedback. In successful groups, members readily share how they perceive others' ideas and actions. They express what's true for themselves rather than talking for or about others. They ask for and offer information directly, rather than expressing their feelings later to an irrelevant third party. Going home from a meeting and ranting to your husband or wife about some group member's behavior is of no assistance to improving the group.

5. Realize that timing is important. Share your reactions to a behavior as soon after the behavior as you can so that others will know what you're

talking about. For example, if you think the group's effectiveness is hampered by straying off the agenda, the time to call it to the group's attention is when you first become aware of it or during the evaluation time at the end of the meeting. It does not serve you or the group well to withhold the information, complain about it outside the group or, after collecting all kinds of grievances, blow up. Deal with an issue as soon as possible.

DEALING WITH DIFFERENCES

1. Treat other group members as you would like to be treated. Behave the way you wish others to behave--it's frequently much more effective than telling others how to behave. After all, telling people how to act may be exactly what you don't want them to do to you!

2. Create a climate in which differences are accepted. Nothing is further from the truth than the notion that for a group to be effective, everyone should think the same thoughts and hold the same values. The success of any group depends on variety, freshness of insight and originality. Respect for differences of opinion is an important sign of a healthy group.

3. Maintain two-way communication. No matter what you do, don't cut off the possibility of someone responding to you. Successful groups maintain perpetual interchange. Information flow among members is essential to productive groups. Find ways to regularly share even the controversial or potentially upsetting information. Keep communication channels open.

4. Practice tolerance. You are the only person you can change. Don't attempt to "make" others change. A person with a tolerant attitude doesn't look for who's right or wrong but asks, "What can I learn from this situation to give me a more complete picture of reality?"

5. Avoid interpreting others' behavior. We tend to interpret the behavior and motives of another person in the light of our own situation. We project feelings about ourselves to other people.

   One way to test your interpretations to see whether they are indeed projections is to ask, "What is it about me that I see reflected in this person that I like or dislike."

DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING OPENNESS

1. Be authentic. Act the way you really feel instead of the way you think others expect you to act; it helps a group function more effectively. Not only that, it also makes you feel better about yourself. After all, you may be wrong about the way you think people expect you to act.

2. Be aware of body language. Think about your body movements while you are in a group. Do they reinforce or contradict what you are saying? Can you read the intentions of others by the way they sit or gesture?

3. Make eye contact. Looking a person in the eye and talking directly to him or her enhances communication immensely. If you are speaking to a number of people, try to maintain eye contact with many or all of them.

4. Accept challenges. A good assumption is that you are capable of more than you think you are. The only way to discover that this is true is to take a chance and learn from your actions. You rarely receive a maximum return with minimum risk. Be willing to risk a little in order to gain.

5. Deal with anxiety. Anxiety is perfectly normal in any new situation. Simply being aware that it is a human response to the unknown can make it easier to deal with. It often comes from excitement or anticipation and from being unable to predict exactly what's going to happen. Often a person will feel nervous before standing up to give a group report, but the nervousness disappears once he or she gets into the body of the report. Anxiety frequently diminishes when you take action.

6. Offer assistance...don't smother. As a rule, don't be too helpful to others. This is not to say people shouldn't be considerate, concerned or available. But group work proceeds best when all members are utilizing their full potential. As a general rule, don't do for others what they could do for themselves.

The first section discussed the three personal needs of inclusion, control and affection. The second section gave guidelines for communication skills, speaking for yourself, dealing with differences and maintaining openness. This section briefly describes four stages of small group development and suggests ways you can assist the group to operate effectively. For information about group development from the leader's point of view, see Booklet 15, "Group Leadership: Understanding, Guiding and Sharing." As you read this section, keep in mind the guidelines presented in the first and second sections.

PATTERNS OF FORMATION [2]

Groups go through stages just like people do. In simple language, the stages of a group are forming, storming, norming and performing. Each stage presents a challenge to successful group interaction, and these challenges are normal and necessary.

The stages, characteristics and things you can do are identified in the chart below.

Stage	Characteristics	What You Can Do
Forming	• People feel dependent on leader or others • Task is unclear	1. Share information about • why you're in the group • what you hope to accomplish • how you hope to work together 2. Assist the leader in providing structure
Storming	• Conflict develops among members, often with the leader • Disagreement exists about what is to be done and how to do it	1. Practice paraphrasing and "I" messages 2. Help determine work rules, leadership, reward system and responsibility 3. Stick in there when the going gets tough

Stage	Characteristics	What You Can Do
Norming	• Cohesive interpersonal relations develop • Information flows • Work proceeds on tasks	1. Point out group norms 2. Participate in giving and receiving feedback 3. Enjoy the feeling of having finally "gotten together"
Performing	• Interdependent relationships develop • Creativity is evident • Productive work gets done	1. Support creativity and openness 2. Collaborate with others 3. Engage in problem solving

SUMMARY

In this booklet, ideas about individual needs and behaviors were presented. The individual is seen as the cornerstone of the group. Each individual has a unique contribution to make to a group. Inclusion, control and affection are needs everyone brings to a group in varying degrees. It's important for group members to achieve the degree of inclusion, power and affection that is personally satisfactory to them. Once these needs are taken care of, group members can turn their full energies to completing the work of the group.

The booklet presented a number of behavioral do's and don'ts, guidelines for individual behavior when participating in a group. These guidelines were organized according to communication skills, speaking for yourself, dealing with differences and maintaining openness.

In the final section, stages of group development were discussed, characteristics of each stage outlined and some suggestions presented for what the individual group member can do to assist the group during the forming, storming, norming and performing stages.

As a group member, you can make a significant difference in the climate and functioning of the group. It takes your interest and commitment to make the group effective, productive and satisfying.

FOOTNOTES

1. W. Schutz, The Interpersonal Underworld. Palo Alto, CA: Science & Behavior Books, Inc., 1967. (Originally published by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., under the title FIRO: A Three Dimensional Theory of Interpersonal Behavior.)

2. B. W. Tuckman, "Developmental Sequence in Small Groups," Psychological Bulletin, 63, 1965.

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